CRPP - RESEARCH TO MANAGEMENT?

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The Northeast Regional Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) developed the Cooperative Research Partners Program (CRPP) to formalize and expand collaborative research among New England's fishing industry, marine science and fishery management communities. The goal of this program is to enhance the data upon which fishery management decisions are made as well as to facilitate communication and collaboration among New England fishermen, scientists, and fishery managers. Research priorities are identified in collaboration with the New England Fishery Management Council to meet the needs of both fishery managers and the fishing industry.

Funding for research has been allocated to both long- and short-term research projects. Long-term cooperative research programs have focused on fishery independent and dependent data and include industry based resource surveys to collect fishery independent information, a fishermen's study fleet to collect fishery dependent information in higher resolution, and a tagging program to study movements and aggregation patterns of cod.

Several short-term research projects have been funded annually and include topics such as habitat studies, conservation engineering, and socioeconomic research. These projects aim to provide more detailed information on fish stocks, marine habitat, and bycatch reduction through the use of more selective fishing gears.

RESULTS

DIRECT

- The development of a raised footrope trawl for whiting for use in the inshore Gulf of Maine fishery.
- The incorporation of a haddock separator trawl for use in the multispecies fishery in the eastern U.S./Canada area.
- Data from the industry-based Maine/New Hampshire trawl survey has been used in a Bayesian stock assessment model for American lobster, the latest monkfish assessment, in setting specifications for Atlantic Herring, documenting the recruitment and abundance of Atlantic menhaden, determining the 2004-2005 fishing season for Northern shrimp, and in the design of a video survey assessment for Jonah crab.

INDIRECT

- Research involving an experimental shrimp fishery in an area of high groundfish concentration to determine if a shrimp fishery could occur and not exceed a 5% bycatch allowance of groundfish. Research to determine the stock structure of whiting in the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank and the mid-Atlantic Bight using genetic analyses.

Funding for cooperative research under this program began in 2000 and, to date, CRPP has funded over $26 million in long- and short-term research. A review of completed and ongoing projects indicates that the money has been well spent. CRPP projects have produced information that has significantly enhanced the understanding of a number of fishery resources as well as contributing to the information used to make fishery management decisions.

Of the 52 research projects funded to date through CRPP, a total of 18 have been completed. Of those, 15 have submitted final reports that have been reviewed and approved and 34 are still ongoing. CRPP research results from approved final reports were grouped into various categories based on their use by fisheries managers and scientist. Categories included direct effects (the objectives of the study were met and used directly by fisheries managers or scientist); indirect (the result were inconclusive but added to the body of knowledge for future research); ancillary (study results were used by managers/scientist differently than proposed); and intangible (research resulted in immeasurable benefits).

ANCILLARY

- The industry-based survey for cod has been used to supply data for a fecundity study of Gulf of Maine cod, on cod otoliths for comparative study with archaeological samples from Native American sites in Southern Maine, isotope analysis and DNA and RNA/DNA ratios on cod and haddock, and fecundity studies for rainbow smelt and yellowtail flounder.

INTANGIBLE

- The establishment of collaborative partnerships between fishermen and scientists as a result of numerous cooperative research projects.
- Enhanced understanding of the cooperative research process resulting from preliminary investigative sessions. For example, CRPI funded a research proposal that involved a series of scoping meetings with fishermen and the fishing industry to discuss cooperative research focused on bycatch reduction techniques.

Although only a portion of the funded research has been completed, the results have had a significant impact. However, to date, results from CRPP research has been transferred to managers and scientists on an ad hoc basis. In fact, a methodology to ensure that research results are available to managers and scientists has not been developed. In order to optimize this information transfer, we recommend the following:

1. Transmission of approved final reports with reviewer comments to the Fishery Management Councils.
2. Posting the executive summaries of approved final reports on the CRPP website along with email bulletin to interested parties indicating availability of final report.
3. Formation of a panel to review approved final reports to determine their potential utility/applicability to the management process and develop recommendations for consideration by the Councils.

Photos and map compliments of MA DMR